



VAMPIRE

n.19

LAU
CONWAY
TAM





VAMPI

SERPENT'S KISS

PART ONE

DAVID CONWAY STORY

KEVIN LAUPENCILS

ALAN TAM INKS

HABERLIN STUDIOS COLORS

MICHAEL CONLEY LETTERS

MAUREEN MCTIGUE EDITS

WHAT HAS COME BEFORE

Everything Vampi's known is dead.

The past she believed her own was fabricated. The man she trusted above all lied to her. The greatest evil she knew helped create her. Her greatest foe is now her only friend—and she's family.

Having spent her life under Jacob Jones's wing, Vampi felt safe within BioCorp. Jones had promised to cure her of her vampirism, the one curse she couldn't overcome. Her lack of family didn't bother her, she had friends, she had a job to do, her goals weren't expansive, but they were her's.

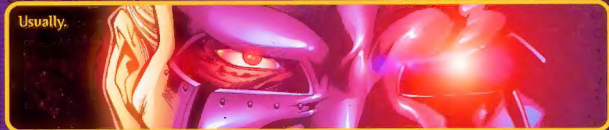
Everywhere she turned on behalf of BioCorp, trouble followed. Discovering the Meat Boutique and wanted to shut it down, Vampi meets Endura who, though not a bloodsucker, was more a vampire than Vampi would ever be. In defeating Endura, Vampi unleashed the full fury of Archangel, who would prove to be her greatest threat.

Archangel wanted Vampi. He wanted her dead. He wanted to get to Jones. He wanted BioCorp destroyed. After employing minions, like Endura and the Salary-men, he put his young apprentice to work.

Xenocide works at getting to Vampi as the young vampire struggles to find a way to defeat the Phage scourge that Archangel has unleashed upon the Earth. A highly addictive drug, Phage reduces the user to purely animal instincts—only they're much more monstrous than anyone would believe.

Vampi has met her match in Xenocide, but Xenocide is more bloodthirsty. Her fight is with Vampi because that's what Archangel wants. And what he wants, he gets.

Usually.



Xenocide puts Vampi through the wringer, but right at the moment of utter defeat the truth saves them.

Archangel created them both, alongside his partner Jacob Jones. The two girls were the only successes in a long scientific struggle to create the ultimate weapons. And while the girls are human, they've been altered. Genetically altered with the DNA of dragon-like creatures that once lived on this world.

But before he has total control over the girls, Archangel lost control of Xenocide who destroyed his face. She was then reprogrammed to be only little more than his lapdog, obediently doing everything she was told to do, as viciously as he wanted it done. At the same time, her genetic little sister was quietly cowering before her own talents emerged.

Once Xenocide realized that Archangel would sacrifice her at any time, and that Vampi had gone out of her way not to kill her, Xenocide switches sides and helps Vampi destroy Archangel. But that was only one step since Jacob Jones showed his true colors. He wanted to rule the world, but have the world in his own unique, pure image. No dissent, no differences, no plight, none of the things that makes people real, and the work interesting.

Vampi agrees that no war would be wonderful, but not at the expense of individuality, and as someone who has just realized how unique she is, she won't stand for his decision. He toys with her, promising her to finally cure her, relieve her of her vampiric tendencies and let her lead a normal life under his new vision.

With all she's been through, with these new revelations, alongside her newly found sister, Vampi stands firm. Jacob might have meant something to her once, but not now. And though she tries to have him see her side of things, she can only watch his greed destroy him.

Her world, her past, is dead. And it's now into the future she goes, with a new attitude, new hopes and a new goal to finally found out who she truly is and just what these creatures are that gave her life.



THE MORE THINGS CHANGE,
THE MORE THEY STAY THE SAME.



ARCHANGEL MAY BE DEAD AND GONE, BUT HIS LEGACY LIVES ON IN THEM -- PHAGE-FREAKS, HIS BASTARD CHILDREN.

THE SUPPLY OF PHAGE DRIED UP QUICKLY AFTER NEVERLAND WAS DESTROYED.



BUT NOT QUICKLY ENOUGH.

THESE CREEPS ARE TERMINAL CASES -- THE MOST DANGEROUS PHASE OF THE ADDICTION.



MONSTERS MOTIVATED BY JUST ONE THING...

PHAGE HAS TURNED THEM INTO SOMETHING LESS THAN HUMAN.





AN INSATIABLE
THIRST FOR BLOOD.



THAT'S SOMETHING
I CAN RELATE TO.



SOMETHING
I'M HELPLESS
TO RESIST.

VAMPI!



AND THERE'S ONLY
ONE CURE FOR
THIS ADDICTION.



I'VE LEARNED
TO CONTROL
MY BLOODLUST--

— BUT XENOCIDE
DOESN'T EVEN TRY.

AND SHE'S NOT
EVEN A VAMPIRE.

SINCE ARCHANGEL'S
DEATH SHE'S BECOME
OBSESSED WITH
DESTROYING EVERYTHING
AND EVERYONE THAT
REMINDS HER OF HIM.



AS A FORM OF THERAPY
IT SEEMS KIND OF FUTILE
AND DANGEROUS.

BUT SHE'S MY
SISTER -- SO WHAT
ELSE CAN I DO?



—THESE
PATHETIC
CREEPS?

BUT SOMETIMES I
WONDER WHO THE
REAL MONSTERS ARE--?



OR US?

DAMN--
THAT WAS
INTENSE.

THESE
PHAGE-FREAKS ARE
SO PREDICTABLE...

--THEY NEVER
SPRING ANY REAL
SURPRISES.

YOU
THINK SO,
XEN?

I'M
NOT SO
SURE.

I--
I DON'T
KNOW.

WHAT IS
IT, VAMPI?

I WAS
SURE THERE WAS...
SOMEONE
THERE.


YOU'RE
STILL WIRED
KID.

PROBABLY
JUST ALL THE
ADRENALINE.

MAYBE. BUT
HAVEN'T YOU HAD
THE FEELING LATELY
OF BEING WATCHED,
FOLLOWED?

IT'S BEEN
WITH ME A WHILE
NOW --

--EVER SINCE
NEVERLAND.



DOES IT EVER
OCCUR TO YOU THAT
YOU MIGHT JUST BE
PARANOID?

PARANOID?


REALITY
CHECK,
XEN --

-- DO I HAVE TO
REMIND YOU THAT IT'S ONLY
A FEW WEEKS SINCE WE BOTH
DISCOVERED THAT OUR ENTIRE
LIVES HAVE BEEN NOTHING
BUT LIES?

THE MAN YOU
CALLED 'DAD' WAS A
SADISTIC PSYCHOPATH --
AND THE ONE I THOUGHT
WAS MY ONLY FRIEND WAS
JUST AS BAD.

I WAS CONNED
INTO BECOMING A KILLER--
STUPID ENOUGH TO THINK I
COULD FIND A CURE FOR
WHAT I... AM.

A
VAMPIRE, YOU
MEAN?



IT'S NEVER
STRUCK ME AS SO
BAD -- KINDA COOL,
ACTUALLY.

COOL?!

A JUNKIE HOOKED
ON THIS SYNTHETIC CRAP--
OR A MURDERER WHO FEEDS
ON HUMAN BLOOD. THAT'S
THE CHOICE I FACE
EVERY DAY, XEN.

WHICH OF
THOSE ALTERNATIVES
SOUNDS "COOL"
TO YOU?

PERSONALLY?

I THINK THE
SECOND OPTION
WOULD WORK
FOR ME.



MAYBE WE
HAVE BEEN THROUGH
HELL AND BACK
FOR NOTHING.

AND MAYBE
YOU DIDN'T GET
YOUR CURE.

BUT THERE
IS AN UPSIDE TO
IT ALL ...

WE FOUND
EACH OTHER,
DIDN'T WE, LITTLE
SISTER?

BECAUSE OF
ARCHANGEL, I BELIEVED
YOU WERE DEAD-- AND YOU
DIDN'T KNOW I
EVEN EXISTED.

FAMILY'S
GOTTA COUNT
FOR SOMETHING,
VAMPI.

I GUESS
SO... BUT IS
IT ENOUGH?



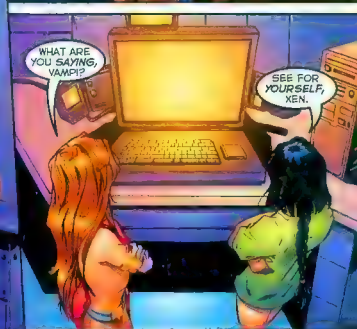
WE MAY
BE SISTERS,
XEN.

BUT WE
DON'T EVEN KNOW
WHO-- OR WHAT--
WE REALLY ARE.

ARCHANGEL
SAID WE WERE THE
EXPERIMENTS' BIG
SUCCESS
STORY.



BECAUSE
ASIDE FROM US ALL
THEY EVER PRODUCED
WAS MONSTERS.



WHAT ARE
YOU SAYING,
VAMPI?

SEE FOR
YOURSELF,
XEN.

ALONG WITH ALL THE REST OF THE HARDWARE WE LIBERATED FROM BIOCORP, I MANAGED TO DIG UP SOME OF THE ORIGINAL RECORDS OF THE XENOcide PROGRAM.

IT CONFIRMS WHAT ARCHANGEL SAID -- WE REALLY ARE PRODUCTS OF SOME KIND OF GENE-SPLICING OPERATION, INVOLVING THAT... THING.

BUT WE WERE JUST LIVESTOCK-- NO NAMES, JUST NUMBERS.

THEY DIDN'T EVEN BOTHER TO KEEP RECORDS OF WHERE WE CAME FROM.

SO IF YOU WANT TO TALK "FAMILY", XEN--

--THIS IS THE CLOSEST THING TO FAMILY WE'VE GOT!

IT'S THE ONLY LINK TO WHO WE ARE, WHERE WE CAME FROM.

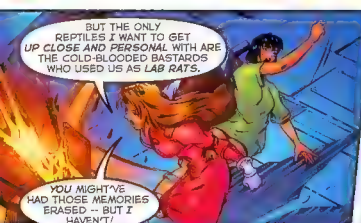
JEEZ, VAMPI!

ARE YOU FOR REAL WITH ALL THIS?

I THOUGHT YOU WERE JUST PARANOID WITH ALL THAT STUFF ABOUT BEING WATCHED AND FOLLOWED.

BUT IF YOU CALL THAT THING "FAMILY", YOU'RE COMPLETELY CRAZY!

YOU WANNA GET ALL TOUCHY FEELY WITH AN OVERGROWN IGUANA -- BE MY GUEST!




BUT THE ONLY
REPTILES I WANT TO GET
UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL WITH ARE
THE COLD-BLOODED BASTARDS
WHO USED US AS LAB RATS.

YOU MIGHT'VE
HAD THOSE MEMORIES
ERASED -- BUT I
HAVEN'T!

WHILE YOU'VE
BEEN GETTING IN TOUCH
WITH YOUR INNER-LIZARD,
I'VE BEEN PUTTING THIS
TOGETHER!

IT'S A COMPLETE
LIST OF EVERYONE INVOLVED
IN THE ORIGINAL XENOCIDE
PROGRAM.

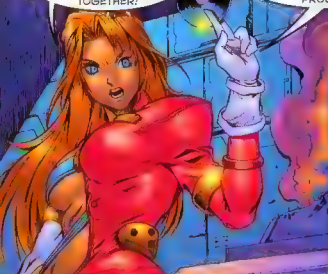


AND I'M GONNA
DO WHAT THEY MADE
ME TO DO-- HUNT THEM
ALL DOWN AND MAKE
THEM PAY FOR WHAT
THEY DID.

SO WHAT'S
IT GONNA BE --
YOU IN OR OUT,
VAMPI?

I'VE HAD
ENOUGH OF
KILLING.

HAVEN'T
YOU?



WHEN I'VE
WASTED THEM ALL--
ERASED EVERY TRACE OF
ARCHANGEL'S EXISTENCE--
THEN IT'LL BE
ENOUGH.



EVERY TRACE?
IS THAT RIGHT,
SIS?

SO YOU'RE
PLANNING ON
WASTING ME
TOO?



OR WAS A
SUICIDE PACT
MORE WHAT YOU
HAD IN MIND?



YOU'RE
REALLY SURE
ABOUT THIS,
THEN?

I HAVE TO
GET OUT OF
THIS RUT.

AND I'LL
NEVER DO IT
HERE.

IT'S JUST THAT
IT SEEMS LIKE WE'VE
ONLY JUST FOUND EACH
OTHER -- AND NOW ...

HELL, YOU'RE
MY SISTER, VAMPI--
I FEEL KIND OF
RESPONSIBLE.

DON'T WORRY,
XEN, I CAN LOOK
AFTER MYSELF.

I'M NOT
LOOKING FOR TROUBLE,
BUT IF IT COMES LOOKING
FOR ME...

--I'VE
PACKED A FEW
EQUALIZERS.

YOU'RE
REALLY SURE
ABOUT THIS,
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--I'VE
PACKED A FEW
EQUALIZERS.

AND THIS BIKE WE
SALVAGED FROM BIOCORP'S
TACTICAL OPERATIONS DIVISION
IS KIND OF A WEAPON IN
ITS OWN RIGHT.

AS WELL
AS BEING A COOL
WAY TO GET FROM
A TO B.

IF YOU
SAY SO,
VAMPI.

BUT I'M
STILL NOT SURE
WHAT YOU'RE
LOOKING FOR.

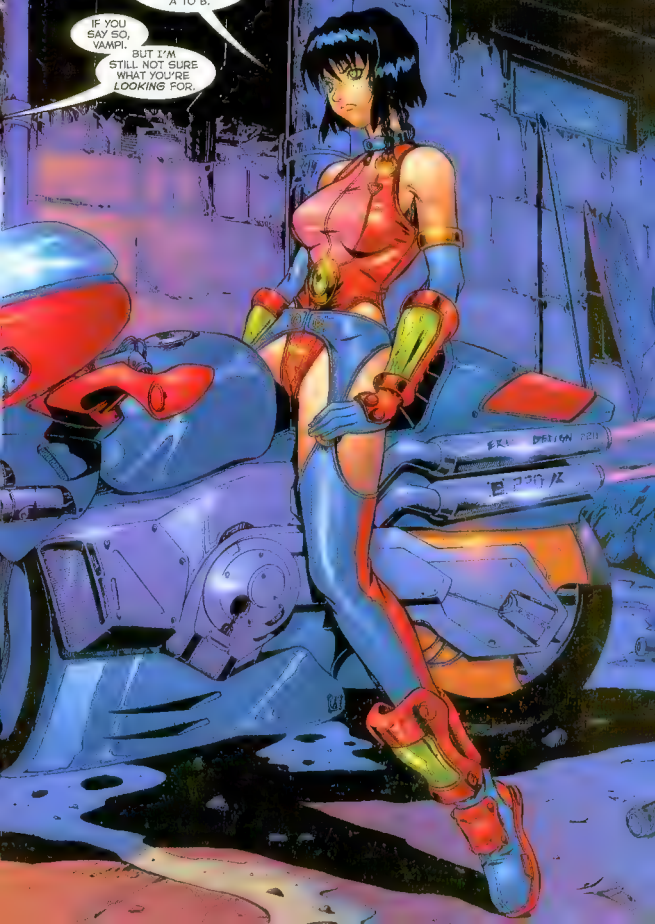


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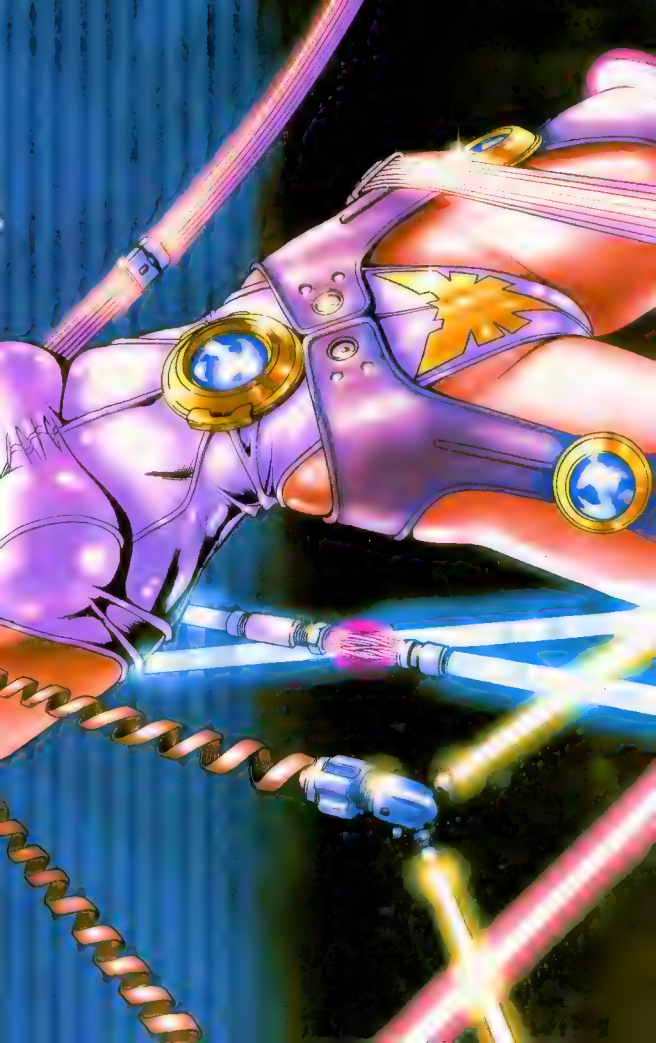
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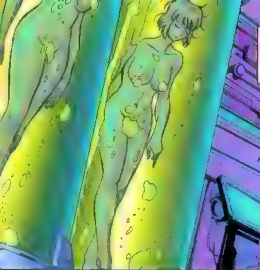
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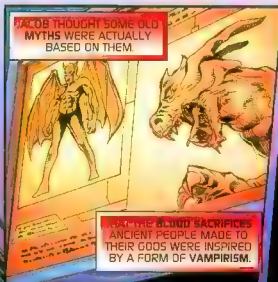






JACOB AND ARCHANGEL NEVER DISCOVERED WHAT THAT THING THEY USED ACTUALLY WAS—OR WHERE IT CAME FROM.

BUT THEY GUESSED IT WAS INCREDIBLY OLD AND PROBABLY INTELLIGENT.



JACOB THOUGHT SOME OLD MYTHS WERE ACTUALLY BASED ON THEM.

BUT THE BLOOD SACRIFICES ANCIENT PEOPLE MADE TO THEIR GODS WERE INSPIRED BY A FORM OF VAMPIRISM.



I KNOW IT'S A LONG SHOT, BUT IF THERE'S EVEN A GRAIN OF TRUTH TO ANY OF IT I'VE GOT TO CHECK IT OUT.

IF I'M GONNA FIND OUT ANYTHING ABOUT MYSELF, I'VE GOT TO START SOMEWHERE.

YOU ONCE SAID I WAS TOO HUMAN TO BE HUMAN, KEN -- MAYBE MY INNER-LIZARD IS MORE TOUCHY-FEELY THAN COLD-BLOODED AFTER ALL.

MAYBE, BUT YOU STILL HAVEN'T TOLD ME WHERE YOU'RE GOING.



ACCORDING TO JACOB'S RESEARCH, THERE'S ONLY ONE LOGICAL PLACE TO START...

MEXICO CITY

...AS WAS EVIDENT AT YESTERDAY'S CIVIC RECEPTION, HONORING AURELIUS AND AURORA VALUSIAN IN RECOGNITION OF THEIR OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO THE ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND URBAN REGENERATION OF MEXICO CITY...

... AND AS THE SUN SETS ON THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE ANNUAL DAY OF THE DEAD FESTIVITIES, CITIZENS HAVE MUCH TO CELEBRATE...

-- THE VALUSIANS' MASSIVE PROGRAM OF INVESTMENT IN-- AND MODERNIZATION OF-- BOTH THE CITY'S AND THE COUNTRY'S INDUSTRIAL INFRASTRUCTURE HAS RESULTED IN THE CREATION OF TENS OF THOUSANDS OF JOBS IN BOTH THE MANUFACTURING AND CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRIES ...

BUT IT ISN'T "ALL WORK AND NO PLAY" FOR THE GOLDEN COUPLE...

THE VALUSIANS HAVE PERSONALLY ASSUMED THE ENTIRE COST OF THE CITY'S FORTHCOMING DAY OF THE DEAD CELEBRATIONS.

AS EVER, THEIR BUSINESS ACUMEN IS RIVALED ONLY BY THEIR GENEROSITY ...

AND, UH, SPEAKING OF BUSINESS AND, AHEH, GENEROSITY... I WAS WONDERING IF YOU HAD TIME TO CONSIDER THE MATTER OF MY, UH, CANDIDACY, SEÑOR VALUSIAN.

BUSINESS AND GENEROSITY -- RATHER A CONTRADICTION IN TERMS.

TO INCLUDE THEM IN THE SAME SENTENCE IS PRACTICALLY OXYMORONIC -- RATHER LIKE THE EXPRESSION 'HONEST POLITICIAN'.

WOULDN'T YOU AGREE, SEÑOR DE GUZMAN?

OR MAY I CALL YOU DOMINGO?

MY HUSBAND AND I WILL BE HAPPY TO SUPPORT YOUR CANDIDACY.

YES, ALLOW ME TO BE THE FIRST TO CONGRATULATE THE NEW INTERIOR MINISTER.

DOMINGO? OF COURSE, BY ALL MEANS.

AND AS FOR HONESTY -- IN POLITICS I FIND THAT IT PAYS TO BE, AHEH, *REALISTIC* RATHER THAN IDEALISTIC.

IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU ARE A MAN WE COULD DO *BUSINESS* WITH.

ONE MORE AMENABLE, I TRUST, THAN THE PREVIOUS INCUMBENT WHO PERSISTED IN OBSTRUCTING THE NECESSARY EXPANSION OF OUR CURRENT OPERATION.

THANK YOU, SEÑOR, SEÑORA, THANK YOU.

BUT THE PREVIOUS -- I MEAN, *PRESENT*-- INTERIOR MINISTER, THAT POMPOUS BASTARD MORALES, IS STILL IN OFFICE. AND HE WILL NOT GO QUIETLY.

BE ASSURED: HE WILL GO.

NOISILY, IF NEED BE.

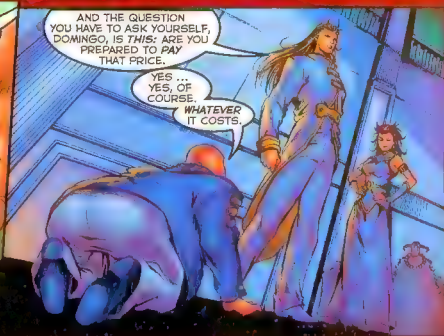
OF COURSE, OUR PATRONAGE DOES NOT COME CHEAPLY.

ADVANCEMENT-- LIKE PROGRESS-- ALWAYS COMES AT A PRICE.

AND THE QUESTION YOU HAVE TO ASK YOURSELF, DOMINGO, IS *THIS*: ARE YOU PREPARED TO PAY THAT PRICE.

YES ... YES, OF COURSE.

WHATEVER IT COSTS.



THE HISTORY OF
OUR OWN COUNTRY--
FROM THE TIME OF CORTESZ AND
MONTEZUMA-- PROVES NOTHING IF
NOT THE FACT THAT THOSE WHO
OPPOSE PROGRESS ARE
DESTINED TO BE SWEEPED
AWAY BY IT.

AND NOTHING
HAS CHANGED SINCE
THE DAYS OF THE
CONQUISTADORS.

THE STRONG
MUST ALWAYS DOMINATE
THE WEAK-- IT IS THE
NATURAL ORDER
OF THINGS.

AND, SHOULD
YOU NEED FURTHER
PROOF...

--OBSERVE.

... AS POLICE
SUCCESSFULLY BROKE
UP AN ILLEGAL DEMONSTRATION
OF ANTI-GLOBALIZATION AND
ENVIRONMENTAL ANARCHISTS,
PROTESTING AGAINST THE INDUSTRIAL
EXPANSION THAT HAS BROUGHT SUCH
PROSPERITY TO THE CITY IN
RECENT YEARS.

THESE DANGEROUS
SUBVERSIVES PERSIST IN
LEVELING WILD ALLEGATIONS
OF POLITICAL CORRUPTION, WIDESPREAD
ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION AND
HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES AGAINST
BOTH THE GOVERNMENT AND
VALSIAN INDUSTRIES.

DOZENS OF
ARRESTS WERE MADE
BEFORE ORDER WAS
RESTORED.

THESE MALCONTENTS
WON'T BE SPOILING
ANYBODY'S ENJOYMENT OF THE
IMMINENT FESTIVITIES NOW.

AND, FINALLY, ON
A LIGHTER NOTE: AS WE
APPROACH THE ANNUAL DAY
OF THE DEAD CELEBRATIONS,
A STORY OF THINGS THAT
GO BUMP IN THE
NIGHT ...

... PERSISTENT REPORTS OF SIGHTING OF THE LEGENDARY CHUPACABRA ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF MEXICO CITY.

THIS ARTIST'S rendition is based on SUPPOSED EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS OF THE "BLOODTHIRSTY MONSTER."

NEWSPAPER LOCAL ITINERANT WORKERS ARE BLAMING THE BEAST FOR ALLEGED CATTLE MUTILATIONS AND DISAPPEARANCES, WHICH REMAIN UNCONFIRMED BY LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS.

HOWEVER, IT REMAINS THE OPINION OF THIS REPORTER THAT ANY EMANATIONS OF THE SPIRITS IN THIS CASE ARE ALMOST CERTAINLY OF THE ALCOHOLIC VARIETY.

BECAUSE, AS WE ALL KNOW, THERE ARE NO SUCH THINGS AS GHOSTS AND GOBLINS, MONSTERS...

-- OR VAMPIRES.

SO, THAT'S WHAT PASSES FOR UNBIASED REPORTING THESE DAYS?

Y'LL STICK WITH THE SUPERMARKET TABLOIDS AND THE 'NET

WHEN IT COMES TO THE WORLD OF WEIRD THEY GET IT RIGHT MORE OFTEN THAN NOT.



AND ACCORDING TO THEM, THIS AREA IS A REAL PARANORMAL HOT SPOT.

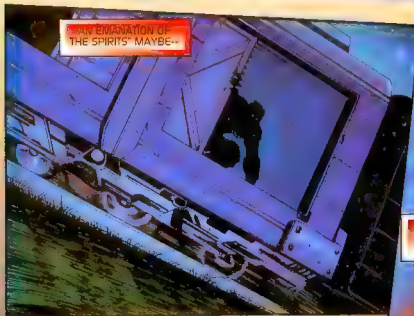
MAYBE IT IS ALL NONSENSE. MASS HYSTERIA, PERHAPS

BUT IT SOUNDS SUSPICIOUSLY LIKE SOME KIND OF VAMPIRE ACTIVITY.



I CAN SEE HOW THIS NEIGHBORHOOD MIGHT PLAY ON THE IMAGINATION.

BUT I'VE GOT A FEELING ABOUT THIS CHUPACABRA STUFF.



AN EMANATION OF THE SPIRITS' MAYBE...



BUT SOMETHING TELLS ME IT DIDN'T JUMP OUT OF A TEQUILA BOTTLE



THE SMALL TOWN
OF SANTA SANGRE
OUTSIDE MEXICO CITY.

PLACE LOOKS
LIKE A GHOST TOWN.



PEOPLE COME HERE
FROM THE COUNTRY
LOOKING FOR WORK.

THE AUTHORITIES SAY THEY
FIND THEM WHEN THEY FIND THEM—
AND THAT EXPLAINS THE
SO-CALLED "DISAPPEARANCES."



THEY SAY THE
CHUPACABRA
DOESN'T EXIST.



AND DISMISS
THESE PEOPLE AS
ILLITERATE PEASANTS.



BONDED BY
CENTURIES OF IGNORANCE
AND SUPERSTITION.

MADRE
DE DIOS.



AND THIS FOR THE
CATTLE MUTILATIONS -- ?

OLD WIVES TALES
OBVIOUSLY.

A STORY DESIGNED TO
FRIGHTEN CHILDREN.

BUT THAT DOESN'T
EXPLAIN THE SMELL
OF FRESH BLOOD.

OR WHY SHE LOOKS
LIKE SHE'S JUST
SEEN A GHOST.

BUT WE ALL KNOW
THERE'S NO SUCH THING
AS GHOSTS, RIGHT?

TAKE IT
EASY, KID.

YOU'RE
OKAY NOW-- TELL
ME WHAT'S--

JUST ANOTHER
SILLY SUPERSTITION
LIKE VAMPIRES

-- WRONG.

— AND MONSTERS.



TO BE
CONTINUED





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SERPENT'S KISS

PART 1 (of 4)

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\$2.99 US • JUNE 2002

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